

Negative labels: Do you know the facts?



Do you know that *an estimated 44 million Americans experience a mental disorder in any given year?*

Do you know that *stigma is about disrespect and using negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness?*

Do you know that *many people would rather tell employers they committed a petty crime and served time in jail than admit to being in a psychiatric hospital?*

Do you know that *stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from seeking help?*



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Mental Health
25 Staniford Street
Boston, MA 02114

Phone: 617-626-8000
Fax: 617-626-8131
TTY: 617-727-9842
www.mass.gov/dmh

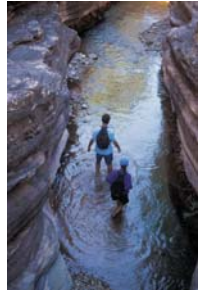
Massachusetts
Department of
Mental Health

STIGMA and Mental Illness



617-626-8000
www.mass.gov/dmh

Before you label people, look at their contents



When mental illnesses are used as labels — depressed, schizophrenic, manic or hyperactive — these labels hurt. Labels lead to stigma, a word

that means branding and shame. And stigma leads to discrimination. The stigma of mental illness is real and painful and damages the lives of people with mental illness.

Stigma discourages people from getting help. Early and appropriate treatment can be the best way to prevent an illness from getting worse. Many people don't seek such treatment because they don't want to be labeled as "mentally ill" or "crazy."

Stigma results in prejudice and discrimination. Many individuals try to prevent people who have mental illnesses from living in their neighborhoods.

Stigma keeps people from getting good jobs and advancing in the workplace. Some employers are reluctant to hire

people who have mental illnesses. Because of the Americans with Disabilities Act, such discrimination is illegal. But it still happens!

Stigma leads to fear and mistrust. Even though the vast majority of people who have mental illnesses are no more violent than anyone else, the average television viewer sees three people with mental illnesses each week — and most of them are portrayed as violent.

Words can heal

Here are five simple steps you can take to end stigma:

- ◆ Learn more. Many organizations (listed in this brochure) sponsor nationwide programs about mental health and mental illness.
- ◆ Obey the laws in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ◆ Insist that newspapers, TV and radio be responsible and accountable in their reporting.
- ◆ Treat all people with dignity and respect. People who have mental illnesses may be your friends, your neighbors and your family.
- ◆ Think about the person — the contents behind the label. Avoid labeling people by their diagnosis. Instead of saying, "She's a schizophrenic," say, "She has a mental illness."

Programs to end stigma

Many national and state groups have begun projects and campaigns to reverse stigma. These groups offer a range of programs and materials.

SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center

P.O. Box 42557

Washington, DC 20016

800-789-2647

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

Colonial Place Three

2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22201-3042

www.nami.org

The National Empowerment Center

20 Ballard Road

Lawrence, MA 01843

800-769-3728

www.power2u.org

National Mental Health Association

2001 N. Beauregard St. 12th floor

Alexandria, VA 22311

800-969-NMHA

www.nmha.org

National Institute of Mental Health

6001 Executive Blvd., Room 8184

MSC 9663

Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

www.nimh.nih.gov